

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2004

**JUSTICE FREEMAN JOINS ILLINOIS DIGNITARIES IN RE-ENACTMENT
OF 1954 “BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION” DECISION**

Dignitaries from law, government, academia and the media, including Illinois Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Freeman, will gather Monday to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision.

A re-enactment of oral arguments in the case, which banned segregation in the nation’s schools, and a panel discussion on the legacy of that decision will take place at Chicago State University beginning at 9 a.m. Monday, May 17.

The university is located at 9501 S. King Drive in Chicago. The re-enacted oral arguments will be presented in the university’s Breakey Theatre. The public is invited and an expected overflow crowd will be accommodated in venues where they may view the celebration via large-sized plasma, closed-circuit TVs.

Justice Freeman, who is a former Chief Justice and the first African American to sit on the Illinois Supreme Court, will represent the voices of Chief Justices Fred Vinson and Earl Warren of the Supreme Court of the United States. Pending the press of legislative business in Springfield, Senate President Emil C. Jones and House Speaker Michael Madigan also will participate.

In this historic case, several school desegregation cases from around the country were consolidated for oral argument. The arguments for the consolidated case began on Tuesday, December 9, 1952 and concluded on the afternoon of Wednesday, December 10. Another round of arguments was heard in December, 1953 with a new Chief Justice, Earl Warren, replacing Chief Justice Vinson who had passed away.

Attorney James Montgomery will play the part of Thurgood Marshall, the legendary head of the NAACP who argued the case for the plaintiffs and later became the first African American to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Attorney Lawrence Jay Weiner will play the part of John W. Davis, the lawyer who represented the defendant school districts.

Eight other members of the Illinois judiciary will serve as associate justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. They are: Illinois Appellate Judges Anne Burke, Rodolfo Garcia, Shelvin Hall, Jill McNulty and Ellis Reed; and Cook County Circuit Court Judges Gerald Bender, P. Scott Neville and Stuart Nudelman.

MORE

House Speaker Madigan is scheduled to make welcoming remarks.

After the re-enactment of the Court's oral arguments and the reading of its historic decision, nine panelists will discuss the topic, "Fifty Years Later . . . Where Are We Now?"

The discussion is scheduled to be opened by Senate President Jones and moderated by WMAQ-TV anchor Warner Saunders. Other media participants in the program include Diann Burns from WBBM-TV, Harry Porterfield from WLS-TV and Allison Payne from WGN-TV.

Panelists will include Cook County Circuit Judge Arnette Hubbard; State Sen. Mattie Hunter; SIU School of Law Dean Peter Alexander; attorney James Bartley, partner with the firm of Klein, Thorpe and Jenkins, Ltd; Governor's State University Adjunct Professor Ronald Bean; attorney James C. Franczek Jr., founding partner of Franczek Sullivan P.C.; DePaul University College of Liberal Arts Dean Michael Mezey; DePaul University School of Education Retired Dean Barbara Sizemore; and Trinity United Church of Christ Senior Pastor Jeremiah Wright.

The event will be televised live on PBS stations around the state and schools will be able to tap in via satellite TV.

The public television stations broadcasting the event live are WYCC Channel 20 Chicago and suburbs; WSIU Channel 8 Carbondale; WILL Channel 12 Champaign-Urbana-Decatur; and WUSI Channel 16 Olney. WEIU Channel 51 Charleston will broadcast the program on tape delay at 12:30 p.m.

Other PBS stations that may broadcast the event are WSBC Channel 14 Jacksonville; WMEC Channel 22 Macomb; WQPT Channel 24 Moline-Quad Cities; WTVP Channel 47 Peoria and WQEC Channel 27 Quincy.

A musical interlude prior to the re-enactment of the oral arguments will be provided by the Homewood Flossmoor High School choir. Other government officials and dignitaries are expected to attend.

May 17th marks the 50th anniversary of the historic ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that made illegal the notion and practice that segregated schools could be "separate but equal."

The program at Chicago State University is sponsored by the Illinois Commission on Brown v. Board of Education.